

Need Accommodations or Modifications in Housing?

Guide to Requesting
Reasonable Accommodations
and Modifications

LEGAL COUNCIL
FOR HEALTH JUSTICE
Updated Aug 2021



What are Reasonable Accommodations and Modifications?

The Fair Housing Act (FHA) defines **reasonable accommodations** as changes to rules set by a housing provider to ensure equal opportunity to use and enjoy housing. Allowing a service animal in a building with a “no pet” rule is an example.

Reasonable modifications are physical changes made to a dwelling to ensure equal opportunity to use and enjoy housing. Installing a wheelchair ramp is an example.

A request is ‘**reasonable**’ when:

- It is needed to ensure full use and enjoyment of housing
- There is a clear relationship between the request and the disability



Who Qualifies for Them? Who Provides Them?

Anyone with a **disability** can make a request. The FHA defines a person with a disability as:

- Those with a **physical/mental impairment** that limits major life activities
- Those **thought of** as having such an impairment
- Those with a **record** of such an impairment

The FHA calls for housing providers to offer accommodations and modifications **when requested**.



How to Request Reasonable Accommodations and Modifications

Step One: Decide What Changes You Need

Assess your unit and the policies set up by your housing provider. Then, decide **what changes are necessary** so you can enjoy your unit and the grounds. You do not have to make a request upon moving in—you can make it at any time.

Step Two: Communicate with Your Housing Provider

The FHA does not require you to make requests in a certain way. Each housing provider might have their own methods for submitting requests, though. Check with your provider beforehand.

However, housing providers **cannot refuse requests from those who do not follow their methods**.

Step Three: Submit Your Request

Making a **written request is the best practice**, but is not required. In your request, name yourself as someone with disabilities under the FHA and answer these questions:

- Are you requesting an accommodation or a modification?
- What specific changes are you requesting?
- Why are these changes necessary? How will they help you?

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Tips for Submitting Requests

Keep Records of Requests

Records should include a **copy of your written request**, **who** it was sent to, and **when** it was sent.

Send a Support Letter

It may help to ask your doctor to write a **support letter** to your housing provider. The letter should:

- Be on official letterhead
- Confirm that the person requesting a support letter meets the FHA's definition of disability
- Explain the relationship between the disability and the need for the requested change

Work Together

Requesting an accommodation or modification means **engaging in an interactive process with your housing provider**. You may have to meet many times to work out the details of your request. Do not compromise on a different change if it will not meet your needs.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has a sample request letter you can use:

bit.ly/HUDLetter



The Chicago Housing Authority has their own request form for those living in public housing:

bit.ly/CHAForm



Send the form to hcv@thecha.org. You can also make a request at **312.935.2600** or via TTY at **312.461.0079**.



How to File a Complaint

A housing provider **can deny a request** if:

- The request was not made by or for someone with a disability
- There is no disability-related need for the change
- The change puts an extreme financial and administrative load on the housing provider

If you feel your housing provider or property owner has **wrongly denied your request** for an accommodation or modification, you can file a complaint with **the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO)**.

Online

File on the HUD's website:

bit.ly/HUDComplaint

Phone

Call an FHEO intake specialist at **1.800.669.9777**, the regional FHEO office at **312.913.8453**, or by using the HUD's toll-free teletypewriter (TTY) line at **1.800.877.8339**

Email

Complete the HUD complaint form:

bit.ly/HUDForm



Email to:
ComplaintsOffice05@hud.gov

Mail

Send the HUD form to:

Chicago Regional Office of FHEO
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Ralph H. Metcalfe Federal Building
77 West Jackson Boulevard,
Room 2101
Chicago, Illinois 60604-3507